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William Tecumseh Sherman as  
College President

By WALTER L. FLEMING

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# William Tecumseh Sherman as College President

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The Louisiana State Seminary (now the Louisiana State University,) began its first session on January 2, 1860, with William Tecumseh Sherman as superintendent or president. The University, a few months ago, celebrated with brilliant exercises its semi-centennial, and upon that occasion there came from New York to speak for the family of its first executive P. Tecumseh Sherman, the youngest son of the general. During the first years of its existence the institution has passed through many vicissitudes and has developed from a small military seminary into a modern University, but it has never lost the impress of its first organization, perfected from 1859 to 1861 by Sherman. During the war Sherman's expressed wishes preserved the institution from total destruction by the Federal armies, and after the war the University, struggling under the weight of carpet-baggism, continued to receive assistance from him in his position of authority. Finally, it was due mainly to him that the Federal government gave to the University its present beautiful site—the old military post of Baton Rouge.

The Louisiana State Seminary, to the presidency of which Sherman was elected on August 2, 1859, was in origin and organization similar to the state universities of other states. Its endowment was derived from the sale of public lands donated in 1806 and 1811 for educational purposes to the state of Louisiana. For the location of the school many towns fought before the legislature until 1852 when that body chose a site out in the pine woods four miles from Alexandria, in Rapides Parish, on the north bank of Red River. Here during the next six years a fine building was erected, and meanwhile the legislature enacted several laws providing for the academic organization.

The first faculty was elected in August, 1859. Sherman was made superintendent and professor of engineering; Dr. Anthony Vallas, a noted Hungarian scholar, exiled on account of his connection with the Revolution of 1848, was professor of mathematics;

Francis W. Smith and David French Boyd, both young Virginians and graduates of the University of Virginia, were professors respectively of chemistry and ancient languages; E. Berte St. Ange, a graduate of the Lycée Charlemagne, Paris, and formerly an officer of the French navy and a noted duellist, was professor of modern languages. The surgeon and adjutant was Dr. John Sevier of Tennessee who had served with distinction in Nicaragua under William Walker, the filibuster; later Dr. Sevier gave place to Dr. Powhatan Clarke, a Virginian, trained in Paris, who now is the president of the Retired Baltimore College of Physicians and Surgeons and is the only surviving colleague of Sherman.

The appointment of Sherman was somewhat of a surprise to him. After resigning from the army he had tried banking and law in California, New York, and Kansas, and, being disgusted with both professions, had applied for the Louisiana position. His attention had been called to this place by Major Don Carlos Buell of the War Department, and his election was brought about mainly through the influence of General G. Mason Graham, of Louisiana, half brother of General R. B. Mason, who had been Sherman's commanding officer in California. Graham, then a resident of Rapides parish and vice-president of the Board of Supervisors, had formed a favorable opinion of Sherman. In connection with the election an interesting incident is related. Before coming to Sherman's application the board examined voluminous papers relating to the merits of several other candidates. Sherman's application consisted of a half page note making application for the place and referring to Braxton Bragg, P. G. T. Beauregard, and Richard Taylor, all then living in Louisiana. "No sooner was this letter read," so the story goes, "than Sam Henarie, a plain business man and a member of the board, exclaimed; 'By God, he's my man. He's a man of sense. I'm ready for the vote.' 'But,' said Governor Wickliffe, 'we have a number more of applications. We must read them all.' 'Well, you can read them, but let me out of here while you are reading. When you get through, call me and I'll come back and vote for Sherman.' "

Sherman was in Leavenworth, Kansas, practicing law when notified of his election. He went at once to Lancaster, Ohio, where his family was staying and there remained during the rest of the summer. In preparation for the opening of the Seminary



he carried on an extensive correspondence with army officers, notable among them Captain George B. McClellan, in regard to the plans and policies best suited to military schools. In November he came south to arrange for the beginning of the first session.

Sherman's first work in Louisiana was the preparation of a body of rules for the government of officers and students of the Seminary. For some of these he drew upon the regulations of the Virginia Military Institute, already famed as a military school, and upon his own experience at West Point. Some of the more interesting rules are as follows:

No Cadet shall keep a waiter, horse, or dog.

No Cadet shall in any way use tobacco, nor have it in his room or in his possession.

No Cadet shall cook or prepare food in the Seminary building, or have cooked provisions in his room, without permission.

No Cadet shall visit the room of any other Cadet during the hours allotted to study and sleep.

No Cadet shall send or accept a challenge to fight a duel, or shall be the bearer of such a challenge, written or verbal.

Any Cadet who shall abuse another Cadet, by playing unjustifiable tricks on him, shall be punished according to the nature of the offense.

No Cadet shall throw stones or other missiles in the vicinity of the building.

No Cadet shall play cards, or have them in his possession. Games of Chess and Backgammon will be allowed, but only in recreation hours; and in no case will betting of money or other things be permitted.

All unnecessary talking at the table is prohibited. The Carvers alone shall call for the waiters.

Wasting, or taking from the Mess Hall, provisions, or mess furniture of any kind, is strictly forbidden.

A minority of the Board of Supervisors was opposed to the military feature of the organization, and one of these secured the manuscript of the regulations prepared by the superintendent and for several months refused to return it. Consequently it was not printed until the summer of 1860. The original manuscript of the regulations in Sherman's handwriting was taken from the Seminary during Bank's Red River expedition in 1864 by General T. Kirby Smith and was returned to the Louisiana State University by his son in 1909.

A circular of information was next prepared and sent out over the state. This circular emphasized the fact that the school

would be a military and scientific institution, and not a classical school similar to the numerous other colleges which the state of Louisiana had tried to establish but had failed.

Early in November, 1859, Sherman moved to the Seminary building in order to push to completion the work which still had to be done. In his memoirs he says of this work:

"A carpenter named James resided there and had the general charge of the property; but, as there was not a table, chair, blackboard, or anything on hand, necessary for the beginning, I concluded to quarter myself in one of the rooms of the Seminary, and board with an old black woman who cooked for James, so that I might personally push forward the necessary preparations. There was an old rail fence about the place and a large pile of boards in front. I immediately engaged four carpenters, and set them to work to make out of these boards mess-tables, benches, black-boards, etc. I also opened a correspondence with the professors-elect, and with all parties of influence in the State, who were interested in our work."

The fact that Sherman boarded with the carpenters gave the foundation to the story of later days that the state of Louisiana, gathering all its resources for war, refused to pay Sherman's salary and thus reduced him to such straits that he was forced to live on servant's fare. He, at the time, complained that the negroes thought him "as rich as Croesus himself." He wrote to Mrs. Sherman "that the old cook Amy always hid away for me the best pieces of butter and made my breakfast and dinner better than the carpenters', always saying she knowed I wasn't used to such kind of living. She don't know what I have passed through."

In December as soon as he had cleared the building of rubbish Sherman went to New Orleans and there purchased furniture and the texts and reference books necessary for the beginning of academic work.

During November and December he conducted an extensive correspondence with those who were interested in his work. To former army acquaintances he wrote for advice as to organization and administration. From Chicago George B. McClellan sent information as to text-books, uniforms, athletics, and the course of study. Braxton Bragg, formerly Sherman's commanding officer in the Third Artillery, wrote from his plantation at Thibodeaux, Louisiana, that he was urging the merits of the

Seminary, and P. G. T. Beauregard, then stationed in New Orleans, sent greetings and offers of support to the institution.

In December the professors gathered at Alexandria and at the Seminary in readiness for the opening. Sherman's estimates of his colleagues are found in his letters to his wife. Of Dr. Vallas he wrote, "he is an Episcopal clergyman but his religion don't hurt him much. He seems a pleasant enough man, fifty years old, fat, easy and comfortable." Of the others he said: "Professor Boyd is a young man . . . a very clever gentleman . . . Mr. Smith is one of the real Virginia F. F. V's a very handsome young man of twenty-two who will doubtless be good company—(Vallas and St. Ange are very clever gentlemen—but these are foreigners with their peculiarities.) We have also a Dr. Sevier here of Tennessee, a rough sort of fellow but a pretty fair sort of man—indeed, on the whole, the professors are above the mediocrity."

Of his first meeting with Sherman, Professor Boyd, who succeeded him as president, wrote in later years: "Late in the afternoon of the day before the school was to open, I reported at the office of the superintendent, Colonel W. T. Sherman. He received me very kindly and in his characteristic way chatted about everything. He was then, as he ever was, the prince of talkers. I fell in love with him at first sight. His appearance was very striking. Tall, angular, with figure slightly bent, bright hazel eyes and auburn hair, with a tuft of it behind that would, when he was a little excited, stick straight out. Until I met him I had supposed him a Georgian; and, when he corrected me, and told me, that he was from Ohio, I could but ask, considering the great sectional feeling and excitement then over the country, if he was related to the then famous Republican candidate for the speakership of the House, John Sherman? 'Only a brother,' said he, 'and I don't care who knows it!' I could but admire the courage and defiance of his reply. But from that time on, he and I had it up and down, hot and heavy on politics, yet always so pleasantly."

To the opening of the Seminary on January 2, 1860, there came "a heterogeneous crowd of matriculates." "The sons of wealthy planters from the rivers, and aristocratic Creoles from the South, the nimble pony-riding Cajans from the prairies, and the diligent quiet fellows from the pine woods composed the

corps of cadets and came to be known as 'Sherman's boys'. He always spoke of them as 'my boys,' continuing to do so after he left the college. Among them were some wild subjects, impatient of control, and Sherman's life at the college was not all smooth sailing." So wrote one of those boys who for two years sat under Sherman's instruction.

The superintendent remarked upon the fact that many of the boys were accompanied by their mothers who seemed to think that going to college was a dangerous business and who parted from their sons "with tears and blessings". "The dullest boys", he said, "have the most affectionate mothers, and the most vicious boys here come recommended with all the virtues of saints. . . . Of course I promised to be a father to them all." Some of the parents wrote to Sherman giving minute instruction as to how their sons were to be looked after, how disciplined, fed, and clothed. The superintendent was expected to perform duties ranging from those of a nurse or mother to those of a jailor. But most of them, he states, were wholly sensible in their views of what they expected their sons to get from their college course. A curious request made by Major P. G. T. Beauregard, then living in New Orleans, was that his son be given a room-mate "who has not seen much of city life."

The best source of information about the opening of the Seminary is the private correspondence of Sherman, who wrote frequently and without reserve to his wife and little daughter and other relatives. From letters written in January, 1860, we learn that the work was rapidly organized. He says:

"I took things in hand *a la* militarism, usurped full authority and began the system *ab initio*. We now have thirty-two cadets who attend reveille and all roll calls like soldiers, have their meals with absolute regularity and are always hard at work at mathematics, French and Latin. I am the only West Pointer, but they submit to me with the docility of lambs. A good many gentlemen have attended their sons and are much pleased with the building and all arrangements. . . .

I have to write many letters to their fathers and mothers, who think I must take particular care of their children, but I cause all to be treated just alike. They all recite every day in algebra, French and Latin, besides which we drill them like soldiers an hour each day. At present I help the other Professors, but after a while that won't be necessary, and therefore I will have more time. We now have fifty young men, some of whom are only fifteen years old and some are men, but all of them eat, sleep, study and recite their lessons in this building.

We put three or four in a room. All have their beds, which they make on the floor; at daylight they make up their beds, roll them up and strap them. They then sweep out their own rooms, and study their lessons till breakfast at seven o'clock, then they commence to recite and continue reciting till 4 P. M. when they are drilled an hour. At sundown they get their supper and study their lessons till 10 o'clock, when all go to bed and sleep till day-light."

With the students Sherman was popular in spite of the fact that by the military system he was given a peculiarly irritating control over the liberty-loving young southerners. He saw to the enforcement of the usual military regulations; he confiscated the boxes of good things sent from home to the hungry young fellows; he advised the students about their accounts at the Seminary store; he looked after their clothing, and, as much as possible, performed the duty of parent. He soon knew each student personally, and, since he frequently attended the recitations, he soon knew every man's class standing. "When occasion required," writes an old student, "he knew how to reprimand, and the words of kindness and encouragement often fell from his lips." With student and professor he was on pleasant, familiar terms and in each he took a deep interest. A colleague wrote of him:

"He made every professor and cadet at the Seminary keep his place and do his duty; at the same time, he was the intimate, social companion and confidential friend of the professor, and a kind, loving father to the cadet. All loved him. In the 'off hours' from study or drill, he encouraged the cadet to look him up and have a talk. And often have I seen his private rooms nearly full of boys, listening to his stories of army or western life, which he loved so well to tell them. Nor could he appear on the grounds in recreation hours without the cadets one by one gathering around him for a talk. Nothing seemed to delight him so much as to mingle with us freely, and the magnetism of the man riveted us all to him very closely, especially the cadets. Scarcely a day passed that he did not see each and every one of them personally, asking not only about themselves and all that concerned them at the school, but about their people at home, when they had last heard from them, how they were and about the crops, etc. And if a cadet fell sick, the loving care and attention he gave him! He was at his bedside several times day and night, watching him closely, consoling and encouraging him. Such interest in his students, and such confidence and affection for him in return, and such impressing of his character upon his student, I have never seen in any other college president. History tells that he was one of the greatest generals of this century; let history also tell that he was one of the greatest college presidents."

Military drill began a few days after the opening. Major Smith, the commandant, was in charge of this work, but during the first weeks he was assisted by Sherman, whose attention was given mainly to the "green squad", composed of those whose control of arms, hands, feet, and knees seemed to be limited. "We were an untutored set", said an ex-cadet, "and often provoked the disgust of the officers. Some of us made such slow progress that an awkward squad was formed, of which I was a prominent member, being placed there by Sherman's own direction."

The uniforms were designed by Graham and Sherman, with the suggestions and advice of Captain McClellan. The boys were delighted when the uniforms arrived. The dress coat was a dark blue military frock, with standing collar and gilt buttons bearing the coat of arms of Louisiana. The pantaloons were blue with a black welt down the outer seam. For ordinary wear there was a fatigue uniform. During the first session the professors wore uniforms similar to those of the cadets except that the coat was double breasted. Most of the professors objected to the uniform, but not so the students who were immensely pleased with the show they made. "Our uniforms were showy and uncomfortable," wrote one of them who later wore the gray, "the hat for dress occasions was a gorgeous affair—high and broad and stiff, with brazen ornaments representing the college building, and the coat of arms of the state, and waving black ostrich plumes. An African prince would have given treasures of ivory and gold dust for such a royal head piece."

The question of discipline was of course a serious one. Young southern men of that time were not accustomed to rigid discipline. It was mainly the desire for a stricter training for their sons that caused southern fathers to establish in each southern state a military academy. However at the Louisiana State Seminary for a month after the opening all went well. There were no serious breaches of discipline, and Sherman was congratulating himself upon the situation. But about February 1, when the newness of the situation had worn off, the test of strength came. Among the students were several hard characters sent by their parents to the Seminary as a last resort. These planned a campaign of passive opposition to the authorities. But other happenings brought matters to a crisis quickly. The orderly sergeant re-

ported one of the cadets, and out of this a fight resulted in which knives were drawn. Sherman convened a faculty court of inquiry and upon its findings summarily dismissed both belligerents. Both then apologized profusely and were readmitted only to join the passive opposition. Sherman soon disposed of this. One was expelled upon Professor Boyd's report "for singing a blackguard song". Another, W——, came to Sherman to draw money for the purpose of going into Alexandria to see a dentist. Sherman gave him an order on the dentist, but W—— complained that that was "no way to treat a gentleman" and was soon on his way home.

Then came the C—— case which Sherman reported to his wife as follows: "It is against the rules for cadets to use tobacco—but we know that they do use it), but this morning one did it so openly that I supposed he did it in defiance. I went to his room to see him but he was out, and in one drawer of his washstand I found plenty of tobacco. I, of course, emptied it into the fireplace. Soon after the young gentleman, named C——, came to me, evidently instigated by others, and complained of ill treatment and soon complained of my opening his drawer, intimating that it was a breach of propriety. Of course I soon advised him that his concealment and breach of regulations, as well known to him, was the breach of honor. He said he would not stay and after some preliminaries I shipped him. Another came with a similar complaint and I sent him off and then the matter ended. These two last were dull at books and noisy, quarrelsome fellows and a good riddance."

This "*emeute*", as Sherman called it, settled the question of mastery. The troubles of discipline after this were slight. One parent, P—— T——, alarmed at Sherman's energetic methods, wrote to General Graham that the Seminary, "the last best hope of Louisiana's sons" might be endangered by this severe treatment of the young men; "Will our sons submit to the arbitrary commands of dictators?"; he "fears the effects of stringent personal command—the government which originates in the mere will of the superior." Graham responded with his familiar argument in favor of military government and added that some "have sent chronic cases to this institution as their last hope for a cure, but we don't intend to keep this kind of a hospital. . . .

'There is no other name known unto men' whereby he can get creditably through this institution but order and industry". Upon investigation Sherman found that young T—— had been "oppressed" by Professor Boyd who ordered him out of the class-room for making a disturbance about a pig's tail which some one had tied to a fellow student's coat. These facts calmed his father.

The dry fare at the Seminary mess hall was a cause of much mischief and of violation of rules on the part of the students. To get something to eat they were accustomed to escape from the building at night and take a short cut through the woods to Pineville and Alexandria or to some house where such delicacies as ham and eggs could be had. Raids were made upon the poultry yards of the steward Jarreau and of the country people who lived from one to three miles away. Chickens, turkeys, and small pigs were cooked in negro cabins or in the rooms of the students. The superintendent was at times kept busy protecting the property of his neighbors and several times marauders were caught by him. A member of the faculty said of his activity in this direction:

"He was a natural born detective. From the least little clew he would infer what a cadet was doing. Once I remember we were strolling in the woods, and passed a group of cadets a little distance off. I had observed nothing unusual when he spoke up: 'Those fellows seem a little flushed. They are up to something.' I thought no more of it. The next day he called me into the office and said: 'You remember those boys we passed in the woods? They were concocting a plan to rob the henroosts of the neighbors. They have confessed it all to me.' And by his everlasting vigilance and quick perception he prevented much petty mischief. He was well named Tecumseh. The wily old Indian was hardly superior to Sherman in reading the 'signs' and divining the plans of the foe or cadet."

Some of the students organized a foraging society. Sherman discovered it and obtained "the constitution of the marauders". In order to break it up he demanded that certain innocent students who knew those guilty of stealing chickens—the "Mose Chicken Case" this was called—should disclose the names of the offenders. With much difficulty was the information obtained, the students maintaining that it would be dishonorable "to tell on" the guilty parties. In this connection Sherman issued an order from which the following extract is taken:



"The Superintendent will call upon no cadet to expose the little peccadillos of his fellow, but when these peccadillos amount to violence, breaking the laws of the State, and insults to superiors, the case is different, and it should be the pride of every cadet to keep in check these things, for they aim at the destruction of the Institution itself. There is a wide difference in the two classes of cases. Older and better informed cadets are now cautioned against being drawn into the custom of concealing real wrongs and outrages, because it looks like "tattling". Mischievous cadets will try to establish this rule, because it will shelter them in their mischief."

When the food was unbearable, as it was at times, the students were almost uncontrollable. On one occasion when the meat was odorous the student body threw the dishes and their contents on the floor; at another time they ran the waiters from the mess hall, a few of the lawless element firing pistols at the fleeing menials as they ran. After each outbreak the leaders were dismissed, and the food was slightly improved.

The use of tobacco and whiskey was forbidden, but it was hard to break some of the boys of habits long formed. One student, who had stored whiskey in his room, threatened the superintendent with a pistol and then left without waiting to be dismissed. The most lawless were in this way soon "*renvoyé*," as the records politely say, but the ones who remained were lively enough. They ducked the negro servants in the spring, polished Dr. Vallas's blackboards with bear grease hair oil, and raided the steward's stores. Finally a regular guard, as in the army, was established and the mischief was moderated.

There was some church going on Sundays, but the students had to walk three miles to service unless Dr. Vallas preached at the Seminary, which was seldom. There were rumors that the church squad visited the bar-rooms before returning to the Seminary, but Sherman declared these stories were invented by the disappointed shopkeepers of Alexandria who could not get cadet custom. Such games as chess, backgammon, etc., were encouraged in the barracks, though gambling was forbidden. But Sunday was a hard day for the authorities; the boys were without occupation and much mischief was then concocted, especially on their long rambles in the surrounding woods or on fishing excursions.

But Sherman looked after the amusements and recreations as well as the discipline of his boys. Parties and hops were fre-

quently given, and to these the pretty daughters of the planters came in numbers. Sherman was as anxious as the boys for the girls to see the new uniforms, but he says that on all holidays he felt nervous, always looking for some manifestation of cadet mischief.

To the young Louisianan, accustomed to outdoor life and to little restraint, the Seminary routine work, discipline, and indoor life was irksome in the extreme. That the difficulties of discipline were no greater was due largely to the administrative ability and the tact of Sherman, who, in spite of his strictness, was always popular with the students.

The fame of the Seminary spread over the state, and many visitors came to see the school at work. These were treated with the greatest consideration, were shown over the buildings, and entertained at luncheon. To encourage the cadets in habits of neatness and order, Sherman always exhibited the cadets' rooms to those visiting parties which contained young girls and ladies. This scheme, it is said, worked well and markedly reduced the amount of tobacco consumed, or at least lessened the evidences of it.

Sherman's estimates of his colleagues, formed upon brief acquaintance, have been quoted above. He modified his views but little upon further acquaintance. He held the members of the faculty rigidly to their work, believing, as he said to a member of the Board of Supervisors, that "since you pay your professors well, you have a right to expect them to work." He had little patience with the southern habit of procrastination whether in professors or in students. When two of his professors, through neglect to order books found themselves with large classes and no texts, Sherman had the classes marched regularly to their rooms to be given oral instruction. This was kept up until the books arrived.

The superintendent made frequent visits of inspection to the class rooms, dropping in at the most unexpected times. The professors and students were thus stimulated to do their best at all times. A friendly professor wrote:

"Sherman looked well, not only to the happiness and health of his charges and to the military discipline and drill, but especially to the progress of the cadets in their academic studies. He had no patience with inefficient teaching, whether from want of ability, or too much ability,

rendering it difficult for the savant to come down to the plane of comprehension of beginners. Yet he himself was no scholar in the professional sense—not a man of varied and extensive literary and scientific acquirements nor even a general reader. He was rather the rough unpolished diamond, made great by nature and of deep discernment, needing little the ideas of other men. But brilliant and original as he was in thought, he had not the usual accompaniment of genius—want of practicability. Sherman was eminently practical.”

The following incident is related of Sherman at the inaugural lecture of one of the professors in January, 1860: The professor “talked as he might have done to the faculty and seniors of Harvard. I noticed Sherman looking glum and biting his lips; and the lecture over, he whispered to me—‘Every d—d shot went clear over their heads’. But he soon clipped the wings of our grandiloquent soaring eagle and made him a plain barnyard fowl, a practical instructor.”

Likewise he had no respect for labored explanations and reasoning. “Once I remember” said one of the professors, “he asked me my opinion about something. I gave it and then began to give my reasons when he stopped me with this remark: ‘I only wanted your opinion. I did not ask for your reasons, and remember, never give your reasons for what you do until you must. Maybe after a while a better reason will pop into your head.’”

While Sherman insisted upon having firm control over the professors, as well as over the students, there was little friction on this account. Two of the professors—the foreigners—chafed a little and wanted more freedom of action, but personal relations were always pleasant. The superintendent had the respect of his colleagues and, after a few months, the affection also. When in 1860 he was about to resign in order to go to London the manifestation of good will and esteem by the professors was rather a surprise to him, though a pleasing one.

The supervisors and faculty had confidence in Sherman’s judgment, fairness, and probity. He complained to his wife that the board placed too much confidence in him, allowed him too much freedom in financial matters, etc. A member of the faculty, Dr. Clarke, tells the following to illustrate the unwillingness of Sherman to be paid for certain duties.

“He was the most conscientious man I ever knew, especially in the discharge of public duty. His salary was \$3,500 and in addition the Board allowed him \$500 as treasurer (and he received \$500 more as Superin-

tendent of the Central Arsenal). One day he said to me: 'It is not right for me to be at the head of this school and (at the same time) its treasurer. I want you to act as treasurer and you must take the \$500 too.' He patiently taught me bookkeeping and insisted upon my receiving the pay."

The Seminary was isolated from the outside world, and the professors were thus thrown much in one another's society. It was difficult to secure supplies nearer than New Orleans and New York, and servants could with difficulty be secured even by purchase. The unmarried professors and Sherman lived in the main building and messed together. The poor commissary arrangements worried the professors as much as the students. While in Ohio during the vacation of 1860, Sherman wrote to one of the professors:

"I wish we had Cincinnati near us at the Seminary. We should then not be troubled to get provisions, books, or furniture. . . . Though no gourmand I will return with regret from the apples, pears, vegetables, meats, and luxuries of Ohio to the poor bread and poorer meat of the pine woods. It does seem to me that our lot is cast in the remotest part of the present civilized world."

He says he lost fifteen pounds while in Louisiana and that his wife, thinking that he had been starved down there, was preparing dainties for him to take back with him. The old accounts show that wine was frequently brought on to offset the poor bread, bacon, and greens. Sherman at first opposed the use of wine at the faculty table. He wrote to General Graham: "Governor Moore sent a fine lot of cake for the cadets and a basket of wine for the professors. The former was added to their stock and enabled them to set a nice table for the ladies (on July 4). The wine is untouched and I hardly know what to do with it. I think it prudent that we should exhibit as little wine as possible in our rooms or on our tables. I have always paid, and advised the professors to pay, largely toward the general hospitality, and thus far we have done so without wine except claret."

But the fare was so poor that the rule about wine was relaxed. General Graham and other friends of the school frequently sent to the Seminary delicacies from their plantations. To supply the needs of the school Sherman kept a store or commissary at the institution, much to the irritation of the Alexandria shopkeepers. Sherman's accounts show that he sometimes had to restrain the professors, especially St. Ange, to keep them from spending all their salaries at the store.

The young professors admired Sherman and looked upon him somewhat as an elder brother. He was fond of relating his experiences in the army and the west, and they were fond of listening. Many of the long winter evenings were spent by them in Sherman's rooms, the young Virginians smoking and listening and Sherman roasting apples and talking. "What a charming and instructive companion he was to those of us who were thrown with him constantly at the Seminary," said Professor Boyd. "To me certainly was it a treat to listen to his clean-cut and original views on nearly every subject that came up. And young as I was intimate association with so strong and fertile a mind, along with his sterling honesty and warm heart, was a rare benefit then, and a pleasing memory now. When the world knew but little of him, I looked up to Sherman as a singularly gifted man, his mind so strong, bright, clear, original and quick, as to stamp him a genius; and his heart under his stern, brusque, soldierly exterior, the warmest and tenderest. Of a happy nature himself, he strove to make all around him happy; and his integrity and scorn for a mean act were as firm as the rock. Such was Sherman as I knew him most intimately for two years in the pine woods of Louisiana, before he became a great figure in American history. I respected and loved him then as I did ever after, though I became a southern soldier, and I revere his memory now."

Shut off from the world as they were, the young professors welcomed every opportunity of getting out and mingling in the society of the community. When work was ended for the week Smith, Clarke, St. Ange, and sometimes Sherman went visiting the neighboring plantations where they were always welcome. Vallas seldom left home, and Boyd, who was not socially inclined, took charge of the school. St. Ange went to horse races and once bought, with a large part of his quarter's salary, a worthless horse and buggy much to the amusement of his colleagues. General Graham, so Professor Smith said, "was down on him (Smith) for gallanting". Sherman assured Graham that Smith was criticised mainly because he was attentive to a lady who was not of Rapides parish and added that "if we must conform to every rumor we will lead a devil of a life here." Professor Boyd, who preferred reading to "gallanting" wrote:

"Sherman studied the amusements and recreations of his charges. Fond himself of young society and dancing, he gave the cadets frequent

hops, the planters and their pretty daughters coming in swarms. They soon got to be as fond of Sherman as his cadets were. They delighted to have him at their homes on the river and bayous, and many an evening did he spend with them, usually accompanied by his handsome young commandant of Cadets, Major Frank Smith, (killed in Lee's army the night before the surrender at Appomattox), and his accomplished surgeon, Dr. Powhatan Clarke, now living in Baltimore, while not so much of a lady's man remained behind to run the school."

Rapides Parish in which the Seminary was located was noted in the Southwest for its refined and intelligent population—Creole and Anglo-American. The latter element was mainly from the upper South—Virginia, Maryland, the Carolinas, and Kentucky; the former was native to the soil—for more than a hundred years they had preserved in Central Louisiana the best qualities of the Louisiana French. It was a community of planters; hospitality was unbounded; social intercourse was free and pleasant. In Rapides Sherman was a social favorite, and was much in demand for week end visits at the planters' homes on the river. He was generally well-liked, a fact remarked upon by the Federal generals who passed through this region during the Civil War. The politicians would have called him "a good mixer." Says one of his colleagues:

"He loved to mingle with all classes of people, the lowly as well as the high. He understood them all, and he made all understand him. He would drop in on business men in their offices, or stores, and say a pleasant, encouraging word to the common laborer or negro slave. He was fond of children, would pet them, and they would play with him. . . . No one ever lived in Louisiana so short a time, and commanded so thoroughly the respect, confidence and love of the people as did Sherman. He was popular with all classes, easily adapting himself to all conditions and to any circumstances. As a case in point, one evening in Alexandria, he and I had taken tea with Judge Manning, of the Supreme Court, afterwards United States Minister to Belgium and to Mexico. We were there till late. Sherman was to take the early stage next morning for the mouth of Red River, there to take a boat for Ohio to spend the vacation. When he went to the hotel it was crowded—not a room, not a bed. 'But,' said he to the clerk, 'we must have a bed. I am to take the stage in the morning; nor could we go over the river to the Academy, even if we wished; the ferryboat isn't running at this time of night.' 'Indeed, Colonel Sherman,' said the clerk, 'I am mighty sorry; but I have no place to put you.' 'But', replied Sherman, 'you must make a place; we'll not take *no* for an answer.' After studying a while the clerk said: 'Well, if you *will* stay, the best I can do is to turn out the boot-black and give you his bed; but I dislike to offer you such

a bed.' 'No matter about that', said Sherman; 'it will do first rate. If the boot-black can stand it every night, we surely can stand it one night!' And the boot-black turned *out*, and we turned *in*; and the boot-black was a darkey."

Before the close of the first session the Seminary and its students and professors had the good will of the people of Central Louisiana. To a Fourth of July celebration the Seminary authorities invited many people, and so successful was the occasion that hundreds flocked to the final examinations a month later. Sherman announced in the newspapers that all visitors would be entertained at dinner and supper, and, of course, the attendance was large.

Of the closing days of the first session Professor Boyd wrote years afterward:

"Our session of 1859 closed successfully and most pleasantly with the usual examinations, drills, speeches, and great ball. Sherman made an address, and though he had not then acquired that facility which afterwards made him one of the best public speakers in the land, he acquitted himself most creditably, even in the opinion of the large number of able and eloquent men who heard him. At the ball Sherman was at his best and in his glory. He loved company, gay, happy company—and to feel that he was making all have a happy time. Both fathers and mothers of the gay young dancers were there too; also the Governor of the State, the Supervisors, and other distinguished guests. None was neglected. Sherman personally welcomed all, saw all, chatted pleasantly with all—made all feel at home, and have a royal good time. It was a treat to his guests, young and old, to see him enjoy their presence so heartily. Wonderful social man was he! prince of entertainers—a warm, generous spirit all aglow, and a bright, facile mind all devoted to making those around him happy. The ball lasted till broad daylight; and the beauty and chivalry of Louisiana went away with admiration and love for Sherman.

"But I must tell rather a funny thing that happened at the examinations. I had an English class; and among other bits of ungrammatical language to be corrected, I had put on the board an expression taken from General John C. Breckinridge's good "*democracy*" but bad "*Lindley Murray*". Well, old Jesse Bynum, the famous fire-eating Congressman in the days of General Jackson and one of the Supervisors of the Academy, spied it. Turning to Sherman he said: "We can forgive you for being born in Ohio, and even for being the brother of John Sherman, the Black Republican, but d—d if I like your poking fun at our candidate." Sherman thought it a good joke; told him it was put there by the only Breckinridge man in the faculty. Old Jesse excused Sherman, but don't think he ever quite forgave me, though I voted along

with him for Breckinridge. Sherman favored Bell for President, but thought Douglass would be elected. He didn't think Lincoln could be. He was farthest from an Abolitionist—not even a Republican then."

There was much to be done to perfect the organization of the Seminary, and during the two years of his stay in Louisiana Sherman made frequent visits to the capitol at Baton Rouge and to New Orleans to secure needed legislation, etc. He had intimate friends among the Louisiana leaders—Braxton Bragg, Beauregard, Dick Taylor, Governor Wickliffe and Moore and many others. He was, he said "in the land of clover as well as molasses" all the time when traveling about the state.

During the whole of Sherman's stay at the Seminary there was some controversy among the authorities as to the degree of military discipline which should be enforced. General Graham and the majority of the board wanted a second West Point—a scientific school with strict military discipline, the superintendent to have full authority over faculty and students. Sherman stood between the extremes. His friends Braxton Bragg and Dick Taylor were ardent advocates of the strict military régime. Bragg wrote to Sherman: "The more you see of our society, especially our young men, the more you will be impressed with the importance of a change in our system of education if we expect the next generation to be anything more than a mere aggregation of loafers charged with the duty of squandering their fathers' legacies and disgracing their mothers."

The question was carried before the legislature in March, 1860, and Sherman went to Baton Rouge to represent the Seminary. The legislature compromised by pursuing a middle course. The military system was sanctioned, and the institution was renamed "The Louisiana State Seminary and Military Academy," while the question of discipline was left to the judgment of the board. Against strong opposition the legislature voted to maintain fifty-four beneficiaries at the Seminary. Dick Taylor objected to "pauperising" the school. All of Sherman's requests for appropriations were granted.

For a time it looked as if the controversy would injure the Seminary, and Sherman began to think of leaving. An offer of a business position in London paying \$7,500 a year led him to send in his resignation, but so strong was the wish of both factions



that he stay at the head of the school that he agreed to go North to investigate the position before deciding.

When General Graham learned that Sherman was about to leave, he at once called upon the board to meet the increase of salary offered. He offered to guarantee from his own funds an increase of \$1000, (making \$4,500 a year). To Governor Moore Graham wrote that the danger of losing "our irreplaceable Superintendent" had kept him awake half the night; "that a man competent to govern, control, and instruct a large institution is of rare occurrence and if we throw away this one there is little likelihood that we can replace him. . . . I have seen enough to satisfy me that we could not hope to get again exactly such a man for the position, one of so clear, quick and decided a mind, such practical administrative and executive qualities, such experience and varied knowledge of men, the world and its business, combined with such kindness of heart and parental care and watchfulness. I have found fully realized in him all which General Gibson, Colonel J. P. Taylor (brother of the late President) and other gentlemen told me in Washington last September, when they said in the words of Colonel Taylor, 'if you had hunted the whole army from one end to the other you could not have found a man in it more admirably suited for the position in every respect than Sherman.'"

So attractive were the inducements offered that Sherman withdrew his resignation and remained in Louisiana. A few months later the board rather unexpectedly curtailed his authority, and he then expressed his regrets that he did not go to London. Sherman wished the professors to wear uniforms on formal occasions; some of the professors disliked uniforms, and the board was divided on the matter but finally excused the faculty, and the students became more turbulent after the strict régime was relaxed. In a letter to Mrs. Sherman the superintendent wrote on November 29, 1860: "I observe more signs of loosened discipline here. Boys are careless and last night because the supper did not please them they smashed the crockery and made a riot generally. Pistols were fired, which scared Joe, (an Ohio employee) very much,—his education has been neglected, but I think he will get used to it. I fear that the institution is in danger from causes which arose after I left last summer. The alterations made after I left

were wrong in principle, causing General Graham to resign, and since then he will take no interest in our affairs. Governor Moore is intent on politics, same of Dr. Smith, so we are left to the chances of the caprices of a parcel of wild boys."

The superintendent was also professor of engineering, but since his classes would not be formed until 1862 he had no regular instruction work. He taught Spanish when Prof. St. Ange was sick. He says that his Spanish was that of the Mexican border—"Greaser" Spanish. Once in a while a class in mathematics recited to him, and on Friday mornings he presided over the "speaking" in the assembly hall. But his most effective teaching was in history and geography. He was a firm believer in the principles upon which the republic was founded and frequently lectured upon them. He was also an expansionist and fond of talking about that aspect of American history. One of the cadets who sat under him said: "Much given to silence and the keeping of his own counsel, he was fluent and eloquent when he spoke. I have heard him lecture charmingly to the assembled students on the history of his country, selecting by preference chapters of exploration and adventure, or heroic struggle and enterprise, such as gave to the Union the territory of Texas and the great West. Upon me and others he made the impression of an ardent, powerful man, governed by duty and a sense of devotion to his country and humanity."

The students not only liked his Friday talks on geography, battles, expansion, and the far west, but they began to call at his rooms to hear more, and it is said that frequently he would be seen on the campus surrounded by an interested group to whom he was talking of the picturesque events in the nation's history. Few people have ever believed more strongly than Sherman in the political and social results of geographic conditions, and his teachings of the time were permeated with his views.

Sherman's family did not join him in Louisiana but remained at home in Lancaster, Ohio. At first there was no suitable dwelling for them, and later when a residence was available the political conditions were so threatening that Mrs. Sherman hesitated to come. From November, 1859, to March, 1861, Sherman carried on a lengthy correspondence with his wife, his little daughter and other relatives. It is mainly from these letters that we learn

of Sherman's life in Louisiana and of the beginnings of the Louisiana State University. In August, 1860, he went North for a vacation period which lasted until November. After visiting Washington and New York on Seminary business he spent the rest of the time with his family in Lancaster—going to country fairs, speculating about politics, hunting chestnuts with his children, playing and romping with them, and writing of it all to friends in Louisiana.

He had hoped to have his family in Louisiana with him, the state of Louisiana had built him a fine house, and he had taken great interest in arranging for the coming of Mrs. Sherman and children in November of 1860, but the disturbed political situation caused him to leave the family in Ohio. In a letter to his nine year old daughter, written a month before the secession of Louisiana, Sherman said:

"In the back yard I have prepared for a small garden, but the soil is poor and will not produce much, except early peas, lettuce and sweet potatoes. The house itself looks beautiful. Two front porches and one back, all the windows open to the floor, like doors, so that you can walk out on the porch either upstairs or downstairs. I know you would all like the house so much. What I have been planning so long and patiently, and thought that we were all on the point of realizing, the dream and hope of my life, that we could all be together once more in a home of our own, with peace and quiet and plenty around us—all, I fear, is about to vanish, and again I fear I must be a wanderer, leaving you all to grow up at Lancaster without your Papa. Men are blind and crazy, they think all the people of Ohio are trying to steal their slaves, and incite them to rise up and kill their masters. I know this is a delusion, they believe it harder than a real fact and these people in the South are going, for this delusion, to break up the government under which we live. You cannot understand this but Mamma will explain it to you. Our Governor here has gone so far that he cannot change, and in a month maybe you will be living under one government and I another. This cannot last long, and as I know it is best for you to stay in Lancaster, I will not bring you down here at all, unless some very great change takes place. If this were only a plain college I could stay with propriety, but it is an arsenal with guns and powder and balls, and were I to stay here I might have to fight for Louisiana and against Ohio."

Sherman's views on politics were moderate. He was an Old Line Whig and considered his brother John, the "Black Republican," as quite too radical. He deplored the sectional feeling and the resulting controversies and was overwhelmed with grief when

he heard of the secession of South Carolina. No secret was ever made of his own sentiments: he would not go against the Union. So in January, 1861, when the governor of Louisiana seized the forts at New Orleans and Baton Rouge, Sherman resigned. For a few weeks longer he remained settling up his affairs, and late in February he left for the North. Of his leavetaking we have the following account by one of the professors: "The morning he left us he had his battalion formed. Stepping out in front of them he made them a short talk, and then, passing along the line, right to left, bade each and every officer and man—not a dry eye among them—an affectionate farewell. Then, approaching our sad group of professors, he silently shook our hands, attempted to speak, broke down, and, with tears trickling down his cheeks with another effort, he could only lay his hand on his heart and say: 'You are all here'. Then turning quickly on his heel, he left us, to be ever in our hearts."

He stopped in New Orleans for a short stay with Braxton Bragg who was then organizing troops for the "Independent State of Louisiana". From a letter written while in New Orleans to a friend at the Seminary the following passage is taken:

"The truth is I have socially been too much isolated from my children, and now that they are at an age when for good or ill we should be together, I must try to allay that feeling of change and venture which has made me a wanderer. If possible I will settle down—fast and positive. Of a summer eve, with little Minnie and Willy, and the rascal Tom, I can live over again my Florida life, my ventures in California, and my short sojourn in the pine woods of Louisiana; and I will teach them that there are kind, good people everywhere; that a great God made all the world; that he slighted no part; that to some he assigned the rock and fir, with clear, babbling brooks, but cold and bitter winters; to others the grassy plain and fertile soil, to others the rich alluvium and burning sun to ripen the orange and sugar cane, but everywhere He gave the same firmament, the same gentle moon, and to the inhabitants the same attributes for good and evil."

#### AUTHOR'S NOTE

This paper is based mainly upon manuscript material preserved in the archives of the Louisiana State University. This material consists of the manuscript records of the old Louisiana State Seminary, the letter books and miscellaneous correspondence of W. T. Sherman, G. Mason Graham, P. G. T. Beauregard, Braxton Bragg, D. F. Boyd, Stokes A. Smith, Francis W. Smith, Governors R. C. Wickliffe and Thomas O. Moore; correspondence of students and their relatives; the reminiscences of W. S. Bringhurst, René T. Beauregard, D. F. Boyd, and Powhatan Clarke.







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